Passive Constructions in Kuna: Form and Function

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Lino and Amilda. *An bemar sabe*

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Of interest to many researchers is the study of the processes and effects of passives in the world's languages and the contributions that the analyses of this phenomenon have made to linguistic theory. The present work is my own contribution to the discussion of this construction, an overview of the passive form and function in Kuna, a Chibchan language of Panama, Central America.

Because passives are relevant to most areas of grammar (e.g. syntax, semantics, discourse, etc.), its study is an opportunity to explore how different phases of grammar interact with each other. In this work, I explore how the linguistic form and the pragmatic-functional aspects of the language intertwine in Kuna. More specifically, I look at how two proposed functional characterizations of passives, topicalization (Givón 1979, Keenan 1985) and agent-defocusing (Shibatani 1985), can be adopted to describe their occurrence in the language depending on the discourse context in which they are present.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Of interest to many researchers is the study of the processes and effects of passives in the world's languages and the contributions that the analyses of this phenomenon have made to linguistic theory. As evidence of this interest, a significant amount of work has been carried out on passives in the linguistic arena, presenting differing perspectives on how this phenomenon is realized and should be studied. Purely formal accounts of passives have been suggested in the syntactic literature, e.g. Chomsky (1957), Postal (1984). More functional analyses of passives have also been proposed to account for cross-linguistic variation, including Shibatani (1985), Keenan (1985), and Comrie (1988).

There are also works that provide a general perspective on passives and other voice phenomena (Abraham and Leisiö 2006, Shibatani 1988 among others); these collections bring about works from several authors who write about these topics across different languages spanning different language families. The aforementioned studies offer an interesting typological overview of those processes. The present work is my own contribution to the discussion, an overview of the passive form and function in Kuna, a Chibchan language of Panama, Central America.

Why study passives? First of all, the study of passives is relevant to most areas of grammar (e.g. syntax, semantics, discourse, language acquisition, among others), thus, it is an opportunity to explore how different phases of grammar interact with each other.

Second, and more specifically to the Kuna case, Constenla Umaña (1991) reports that the surrounding Chibchan languages (Bribri, Movere, Bocotá, etc.) do not posses passive constructions. Therefore, the exploration of the passive in Kuna may allow future research into diachronic developments of this kind in Chibchan languages.

The present work focuses on the functional aspects of passives in Kuna. The specific claim here is that there are two main functional explanations for the use of the passive construction in different contexts of Kuna discourse: patient topicalization and agent defocusing. What function triggers the appearance of a passive construction in the discourse depends on the set of options available to the speaker for rearranging the two main arguments of the main verb to highlight a non-agentive argument in the clause.

Language background

Most of the Kuna population today is concentrated in two major areas within the country of Panama. First, the majority of the population (36,114)[1] remains in communities in what is known today as Kuna Yala (previously San Blas), a territory that extends for 232 miles across the northeastern coast of Panama. The second largest concentration of the Kuna population (25,236) is present in Panama City, the country's capital. Even in Panama City, the Kuna have been able to maintain their social and cultural organization, thanks in large part to tight community relationships maintained beyond the Kuna Yala borders. In addition to all these, there are other smaller communities scattered through some parts of the Colombian-Panamanian border region

[1] Censo de Población y Vivienda, Panamá 2000

deep within the Darien jungle. According to the latest census, the total Kuna population is over 64,000 people throughout the Panamanian territory, 55,000 of which have been reported to be speakers of Kuna. Exact numbers don't exist for the level of bilingualism and monolingualism of these speakers, but it is important to point out that the majority of children in Kuna Yala still learn the language natively.

As some authors who have worked on Kuna have pointed out, there are some differences between coastal Kunas and border (or jungle) Kunas, more noticeably in the variety of the language spoken. Some linguists (e.g Forster 1977) have called the second group Paya Kuna, characterizing their variety as a related language, not a different dialect. In my experience, speakers of Kuna Yala have reported varying degrees of intelligibility with the Paya Kuna. Whether the differences are enough to characterize the two Kuna varieties as dialects or languages is not yet clear to me. A comparative analysis of both varieties is still lacking.

The current paper looks specifically at the language spoken by the coastal Kuna people. I have chosen to examine this population for two reasons: a) the language I will call Kuna throughout this work is the variety spoken by the vast majority of the Kuna population, so more data is readily available; and b) it is this variety with which I am most familiar as a speaker, given that both my parents are originally from two coastal villages.

Finally, work on passives in Kuna is absent because literature on linguistic phenomena of the language is limited. Those scholars that to my knowledge have written and described aspects about the Kuna language are: short grammars by Holmer (1947)

and Erice (1980); morphosyntactic descriptions by Llerena (1987) and Sherzer (1990); and phonological discussions by Forster (1977) and Giannelli (2002).

Typological characterization of Kuna

Kuna is predominantly a head-marking language with a few elements of dependent marking. There are four open classes in Kuna: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The language has been characterized as an agglutinative, SOV language with a rich verbal morphology. It is also a nominative-accusative language.

The verb is the part of speech that allows the most morphological complexity. The verbal information that can be contained in the base verb are: causative prefix, passive suffix, tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality and positionals. The noun, on the other hand, contains information such as case and number.

Kuna has an SOV order. This is exemplified in (1) below. This order is the pragmatically unmarked order in the language. This point will be further discussed in section 3.1 on word order.

(1) *Igwa Jose sarso-sa*

Igwa Jose hit-PST

'Igwa hit Jose'[2]

[2] Unless noted otherwise, the data in the paper was elicited from 3 different native speakers: Lino Smith, Amilda Morris and Angeri Gonzalez.

Kuna is a nominative-accusative language. There is no direct evidence from the nominal morphology because neither nominative nor accusative case is marked on the nouns. Evidence for a nominative-accusative alignment system comes from pronouns: pronouns as the subject of intransitive verbs (S) and subject of transitive verbs (A) may sometimes have longer forms that are used as intensifiers. The longer form of the pronoun contains an extra morpheme -di that signals the subject of a clause; this longer form cannot be used as the O (object) of transitive verbs. These are exemplified in (2) and (3).

(2) *An**di** Olo sarso-sa*

1S Olo hit-PST

'**I** hit Olo'

(3) *An**di** be-sa*

1S stay-PST

'**I** stayed'

Example (4) shows the prohibition of the longer form in object position.

(4) **Olo an**di** sarso-sa*

The accepted form of sentence (4) is shown in (4'), which does not include the use of the intensifier *–di* in object form.

(4') Olo an sarso-sa

'Olo hit me'

Finally, Kuna doesn't mark nominative or accusative case, but it marks different oblique cases with five enclitics, each in a short and long form[3]:

=gi, =gine	instrumental, ablative, locative
=se, =sega	allative
=ga, =gala	dative, benefactive
=ba, =bali	allative, commitative

[3] The choice of long vs. short form of the morphemes is most likely dependent on the distinction between formal and informal speech (Sherzer 1983:37). Where long forms are used in more formal contexts, colloquial speech is full of short-form morphemes. However, the speaker may sometimes decide to use the long form in colloquial speech.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework

The definition and treatment of passives in the linguistic literature has been a point of interest for generations of researchers in different areas in linguistics. The fact that numerous studies and analyses of the passive continue to be proposed[4] indicates that there is no generally accepted, cross-linguistically valid definition of the passive.

Given the above fact, one must proceed with caution in deciding which criteria to ascribe to when analyzing the passive construction in a language. Over the years, several authors have attempted to establish a number of defining characteristics to help identify the passive construction (Siewierska 1984, Shibatani 1985, Haspelmath 1990, among others). However, the characterization of such features invariably exhibits some bias toward a specific area of interest of the linguist who carries out such a study. Just to name a few, Haspelmath (1990) argues for a cross-linguistically morphological category for the passive; on the other hand, Perlmutter and Postal (1983) define the passive in purely syntactic terms, where morphology is excluded from the definition of passives; and finally Bresnan (1982) considers an analysis of passives in LFG as a lexical category.

A growing interest in the pairing of linguistic form to discourse function has sparked a number of papers dealing with passives. Givón (2006:337) claims that the syntactic typology of any clause-type must be characterized as functional domains to present a meaningful analysis. Furthermore, Shibatani (1985:830) highlights the need for

[4] Andersen 1991 presents this problem eloquently, showing through different authors how problematic it is to find a valid cross-linguistic definition of this phenomenon.

pragmatic and/or functional considerations in analyzing the properties of passive constructions. Also, Abraham (2006:1) claims that languages with lesser freedom of word-order (English is an example) resort to clefts or passives in terms of information structure to achieve the goal of proper contextualization, as opposed to simpler grammatical means such as movement within the sentence.

The analysis that I suggest for the formal occurrences of passives in Kuna is intricately tied to the appropriate pragmatic/functional contexts in the discourse. As Sansó (2006:232) eloquently writes:

> To date, most linguists have been dealing with passive constructions on a fairly abstract level, mainly without discussing problems posed by concrete analyses of textual facts.

This section is an overview of the typological literature that serves as the context on which this analysis builds. The purpose is two-fold: 1) first, it allows to us identify, from the different grammatical categories and structures that exist in the language, the one construction which is relevant for our study; and 2) it sets the context for the understanding of its distribution in discourse.

Defining the passive

For the purposes of the present study, taking into consideration the numerous accounts for a passive construction in the world's languages, it is important to first draw the delimitation of the passive from a set of given constructions in the language. In addressing this concern, the aim of this section is to make explicit those features that passives display cross-linguistically.

In *A Typology of Argument-Determined Constructions,* Dixon and Aikhenvald suggest a number of traits for the types of different syntactic derivations that relate to predicate arguments. Although a number of types are distinguished (with their respective sub-types), argument-transferring operations are the most relevant to our discussion. In these types of derivations, an argument is either removed from the core of a transitive clause, or added to the core of an intransitive or transitive clause. Passive constructions, then, are identified as an argument reducing derivation.

With that in mind, Dixon and Aikhenvald (1997) propose a set of criteria to define a prototypical passive, taken from Dixon (1994: 146). These criteria are identified as being prototypes of a passive construction cross-linguistically, not so much a discrete category in one particular language.

(5) a. Applies to an underlying transitive clause and forms a derived intransitive
b. The underlying O becomes S of the passive
c. The underlying A argument goes into a peripheral function, being marked by a non-core case, adposition, etc.
d. There is some explicit formal marking of a passive construction on the verb (Dixon and Aikhenvald 1997:73)

Throughout the paper, I will consider these four general criteria to be representative of the passive constructions in Kuna. These are in accord with the majority of accepted uses of the passive. However, I intend to find more fine-grained

distinctions that can be useful for a more complete analysis. For the purposes of identifying the passive, these criteria will suffice for now.

Pragmatic function of passives

Givón and Keenan both observe that the passive construction serves as a topicalization strategy, by which a non-agent is promoted into the role of a main topic. Shibatani argues that the primary function of passives is that of agent defocusing, and is not a mere consequence of object promotion or topicalization.

First, we will look at the former proposed function. Givón (1979:186) defines the passive as follows:

> Passivization is the process by which a non-agent is promoted into the role of a main topic of the sentence. And to the extent that the language possesses coding properties which identify main topics as subjects and distinguish them from topics, then this promotion may also involve subjectivization. (Givon 1979:186)

Furthermore, in *Passives in the World's languages*, Keenan (1985) assesses that the passive is a foregrounding (of the object). Functionally speaking, passives may be considered foregrounding constructions: they topicalize an element which is not normally presented as topical in the active. He presents the example below.

(6) a. Mary slapped John

b. John was slapped

c. John was slapped by Mary

Even though Keenan makes a small syntactic distinction between topicalization and passives (the fact that another element can be fronted in a passive construction in some languages), he notes that they are intricately related given that they both serve the same function.

On the other hand, Shibatani (1985) claims that the primary function of the passive is that of 'agent defocusing', not topicalization. He makes this claim on the basis of several observations of the behavior of the passive construction in several languages.

First of all, he notes that passives generally do not express agents overtly. He quotes Jespersen and Svartvik noting that in statistics of passives in English, between 70 – 90% of passive sentences were agentless.

Second, Shibatani notes that numerous languages prohibit or generally avoid an expression of an agent in a passive (e.g. Finnish, Cheremis, Turkish). Finally, he also observes that passivization does not generally apply to non-agentive intransitives. All these observations, according to the author, point to the fact that the notion of agent is critical in passives.

According to the author, these observations suggest that passives are used when "the singling out of an agent is either impossible or unimportant because of its being unknown, obvious or irrelevant." (Shibatani 1985:831) Therefore, the use of passives centers around the agent and its defocusing. He never explicitly disregards the notion of topicalization, but he attempts to shift the focus of linguists to pay closer attention to *agent defocusing* as the primary function of the passive. This differs from Givon and Keenan's perspective which places the main emphasis on the promotion of a non-agent to

the subject position. As a result, each approach emphasizes a different aspect of the clause.

In this paper, I argue for a more inclusive pragmatic-functional explanation for the distribution of the passive in Kuna discourse. In light of the current developments in linguistic typology with regards to passives, I find it useful for Kuna to consider both functional explanations for the behavior of passives and explore the possible ramifications for the adoption of this stance in their analysis in the discourse context.

CHAPTER 3

Passives in Kuna – Form

Identification of the passive

Now the question is whether Kuna fulfills the criteria sketched by Dixon and Aikhenvald. It has been argued in the literature for Kuna (Llerena 1987) that the morpheme *–le* (*-lege* is the long form) on the verb indicates the passive (the example is taken from Llerena).

(7) *We inmala wi-chur gul-lege*
this thing know-NEG eat-PASS
'This thing cannot be eaten'

Sentence (7) is a passive construction because there is an explicit passive marker, the suffix *–lege*. Therefore, Kuna makes a morphological distinction between passive constructions and non-passive types.

An indicator that constructions with a verb + *-le*(*ge*) mark a passive construction is taken from the assumption that the subject of the sentence is the underlying O of the verb (the patient) of the underlying transitive sentence. We can conclude, then, that the intransitive clause (7) derives from the transitive clause (7') below.

(7') *Dule-mar we inmala wi-chur gunne*

person-PL this thing know-NEG eat

'People don't eat this'

It must be noted that there is an absence of the *–le* (*-lege*) morpheme from the verb in (7'). The underlying A (agent) is absent in (7). This highlights the importance placed on the patient and the unimportance of the initiator of the action. There are, however, instances when an agent is still present at the surface, in the form of an oblique enclitic.

An example is found in sentence (8), where the agent is explicit in the surface with a dative case enclitic *=se*.

(8) *Achu e=se sarso-le-sa*

dog 3sg=DAT hit-PASS-PST

'The dog was hit by him/her'

Its active counterpart is shown in (8') below.

(8') *E achu sarso-sa*

3sg dog hit-PST

'He/she hit the dog'

The four criteria sketched by Dixon and Aikhenvald to identify passives fron non-passive types are fulfilled in the Kuna sentences in (7) and (8). We can see from sentences (7') and (8') that there is an underlying active counterpart for each sentence and that the O argument of these becomes the syntactic subject. The A argument on the other hand, is not mentioned in (7) and it is demoted to an oblique in (8). Finally, both sentences (7) and (8) show that there is a specific marker on the verb that distinguishes the Kuna passive construction from non-passive types.

Middle voice and related constructions

Both Shibatani (1985) and Kemmer (1993) observe that passives appear to correlate semantically (and in many languages, formally) with other related constructions, such as reciprocals, reflexives and middle voice constructions in a great number of the world's languages. This typologically common correlation, the authors note, is not by pure chance. As Shibatani notes (848), the passive/reflexive/reciprocal correlation arises largely from a shared semantic feature: the affectedness of the surface subjects in these structures. As a result, it is imperative that the distinction be made, either structurally or semantically, between passives and these other constructions in Kuna.

According to Kemmer (1993), middles fall somewhere between a prototypical two-participant event, with an agent and a patient, and a prototypical one-participant event. The author identifies a large number of domains as potential middles. These include, amongst others, nontransitional motion, change in body posture, facilitative

structures, grooming, other body actions, translational motion, positionals, cognition middle, perception middle or spontaneous events.

For Kuna, the morpheme *–le* that was described above for passives is also used in these middle voice constructions. Sentence (9) presents an example in which the subject undergoes a spontaneous event.

(9) Igwa kundi-le-sa
Igwa drown-MID-PST
'Igwa drowned'[5]

Taking Kemmer's definition of middle voice, we can clearly make a semantic distinction between the type of subject affectedness in a spontaneous event like drowning and that of a prototypical passive, which is a derivation from a prototypical transitive event, with a volitional agent being the initiator of the action.

Also in Kuna, perception verbs are expressed by inserting the *–le*(*-lege*) suffix when these verbs are used in constructions when some property of the surface subject is described.

(10) *Neki yer dak-lege*
house good see-MID
'the house looks good'

[5] Taken from Holmer 1947

(11) *Madu nue gun-lege*[6]

bread well eat-MID

'the bread tastes good'

Another use of the middle voice in Kuna is when the action expresses some change in body posture. This is exemplified in sentence (12) below.

(12) *nue sig-lege*

well sit-MID

'Sit well!' (as an order to sit correctly)

The use of the middle voice / passive constructions in Kuna is distinct from the reflexive and reciprocal constructions, but in a few cases there might be some semantic overlap, as described by Kemmer and Shibatani (1985). There is one construction where the verb, in the middle voice, has a reflexive meaning. This verb is 'to wash oneself'. This is a typical middle verb in languages that have well-developed middles. Here the structure seems ambiguous, since it uses both the middle *–le* and an anaphoric *na*; however, most reflexives and reciprocals generally exhibit the avoidance of *–le* in these constructions, (13) being a clear exception.

[6] Taken from *Us Kwento*, a short story recorded and transcribed by Sherzer (1990)

(13) *Emiskwa na an ob-le-sa*

at.this.moment Coref. 1S wash-MID-PST

'I now wash myself'

Interestingly, this structure and other reflexives share the obligatory use of the anaphoric *na* in clauses *(*Kuna uses an anaphoric *na* as the reflexive/reciprocal marker, much like the English *–self*). Other examples where the use of the *–le* morpheme and the reflexive overlap are absent from texts.

Reflexives and reciprocals in Kuna are structurally almost identical, which causes ambiguity in cases where there is a plural grammatical subject. Except for the verb in (13) this relationship is not marked on the verb and there is no change in valency. As a result, reflexives and reciprocals are not similar to passives and middle voice in terms of the surface structure. The structure of reflexives and reciprocals is shown in (14 below).

(14) na + nominal + verb[7]

na ome mak-sa

Coref. Woman shoot-PST

'The woman shot herself'

As evidenced by the sentence (14), there is no polysemy between passives and reflexives and reciprocals as described by Shibatani (1985). This fact allows us to

[7] Llerena (1987) described this structure in his discussion of Kuna syntax.

identify clearly the passive/middle constructions from reflexives. More fine-grained semantic distinctions also allow us to separate passive and middle constructions, taking Kemmer's (1993) criteria to identify the middle voice.

CHAPTER 4

Passives in Kuna – Function

There are different considerations for the distribution of the two functional approaches to passives (i.e. the use of passives mainly to serve as a topicalization construction vs. the use of passive constructions to defocus the agents). I argue here that passives in Kuna have more than one functional explanation given the richness of the discourse genres and the different contexts in which they occur.

This section mainly explores the potential explanation for both approaches and their consequences on the surface structure in Kuna.

Passives as topicalization

Because topicalization is sometimes tied to information structure and the restructuring of arguments in a clause, we will first look at different word order phenomena that will allow us to set the stage for the functional characterization of passives.

A common topicalization strategy in Kuna is to allow some elements to be placed clause-initially.

(15)

a. *Sapi* *bunolo* *dak-sa*

tree girl see-PST

'The girl saw the tree'

b. *a* *inmar* *achu* *gu-cha*

Dem thing dog eat-PST

'The dog ate that thing'

As a result of this strategy, there are instances where an evident structural ambiguity occurs.

(16) Igwa an sarso-sa

Igwa 1S hit-PST

Example (16) presents a fascinating case that poses an interesting question for the treatment of word order in Kuna. This sentence, depending on the sentence stress provided by the speaker, carries two meanings: 'Igwa hit me' or 'I hit Igwa'. Given the order of the constituents, the first interpretation is the default interpretation, where '*Igwa'* is the agent and the pronoun '*an'* is the patient. The second interpretation is pragmatically and phonetically more marked, where the pronoun '*an'* is stressed, as

identified by several of the native speaker. This type of restructuring for information structure is common in Kuna.

If simple fronting is a common topicalization strategy for Kuna, why resort to the use of a more marked passive construction for topicalization?

This question may be answered when we look at the restriction of topicalization in certain contexts. This topicalization strategy is normally allowed when structural ambiguity does not arise from topicalization (as in the sentences in 15) or if one of the arguments is a pronoun (whether 1st, 2nd or 3rd person) and the other main argument is not (as is the case with 16). Fronting as a topicalization strategy is not available for sentences (17) – (20).

(17) An Igwa sarsosa

'I hit Igwa'

* Igwa hit me

The sentence shown in (17) shows that fronting of the pronoun '*an*' for topicalization, where 'an' is the O of the clause, is not a possible interpretation for this structure. The only possible interpretation is one in which '*an'* acts as the agent of the transitive clause.

Similarly, when the transitive verb has two proper names as its main arguments, fronting for topicalization of the nominal object is also unavailable. This is shown in example (18).

(18) *Olo Igwa oburkwi-sa*

Olo Igwa kill-PST

'Olo killed Igwa'

*'Igwa killed Olo'

Fronting is also restricted if both arguments are neither non-pronominal nor proper names. For sentence (19), the only possible interpretation is one in which the boy is the agent; the dog is denied the agent role.

(19) *Machigwa achu gu-cha*

boy dog bite-PST

'The boy bit the dog'

*'The dog bit the boy'

Fronting is likewise restricted in cases where the clause exhibits two pronominal arguments. Word order serves as the only indicator of the interpretation of the second argument as the agent of the sentence.

(20)

a. *An be dak-sa*

1S 2S see-PST

'I saw you'

* 'You saw me'

b. E an dak-sa

3S 1S see-PST

'He/she saw me'

* 'I saw him/her'

In all the cases described above, simple fronting for topicalization in certain contexts is restricted. It is in these cases that passives allow the fronting of the patient for topicalization as in (20)' represented below.

(20)'

a. *An be=se dak-le-sa*

1S 2S=DAT see-PAS-PST

'I was seen by you'

Therefore, passives can be seen in these contexts to be a topicalization strategy.

Passives as agent-defocusing

Sansó (2006:233) describes three situation types associated with passive constructions: patient-oriented process, bare happening and agentless generic event. He writes that:

> Passives share the basic component of agent defocusing, but encode different situation types. These situation types are sets of situational or semantic/pragmatic contexts that are associated with a particular form of expression.

Under the rubric of *agentless generic event*, the author describes situations in which the agent, usually human, is understood to exist. However, this agent is defocused because of its generic character. Such a situation in Kuna is exemplified in (21) below.

(21) *We inmala wi-chur gul-lege*
this thing know-NEG eat-PASS
'This thing cannot be eaten'

Not all agentless passives fall under the situation type described above. There are cases in which the agent is conceptualized as sufficiently unimportant to be present at all. These fall under the rubric of *patient-oriented process*. In the *patient-oriented process* the patient is being focused and the agent is less central and individuated than the patient. Sansó argues that in discourse, this agent can be identified from context. An agentless patient-oriented process is exemplified below.

(22) *Ua bato imak-le-sa*

fish already make-PASS-PST

'Fish is already cooked'

What makes (22) different from a topicalization passive is the fine distinction of the unimportance of the agent, which leads to its defocusing, rather than the promotion of the object for information structure purposes.

Finally, Sanso adds that the passive constructions may have a syntactically encoded agent as an oblique under the patient-oriented process. The difference here, the author suggests, is that the agent is less discourse-central than the patient but still important enough to appear in the surface. The active agent in these situations is less individuated than the patient, so it is therefore defocused.

CHAPTER 5

Passives in Kuna Discourse

In the context of elicitation, a researcher may well find a number of acceptable grammatical structures in the language. However, without the use of texts, the analysis may reflect its artificial setting, while texts underscore the actual use of language in a more natural context. Therefore, a careful examination of texts will help us extract the grammatical category operating in different settings to see how the construction interacts with the overall tone of the discourse.

It is the aim of the present section to briefly examine some of the interesting findings that surfaced in the exploration of a number of texts. Different genres might be expected to employ more or fewer passives, or even use them differently, and so the wide range of text types explored here is important for the present study.

Social setting

According to Sherzer (1983), Kuna oral tradition is rich and diverse. It reflects the beliefs and way of life of the Kuna viewed from different perspectives. The oral tradition consists of several forms of verbal art which are performed in different settings and for different purposes. Furthermore, these means of discourse can be performed in different ways: some can be chanted or sung; others can be spoken. In the gathering house, myths and stories are chanted and narrated, speeches are given, and counsel to the community is given. In the *chicha* house, where fermented drinks are prepared, girls'

puberty rites are chanted. In private homes, curing chants for sick individuals are performed and lullabies are sung.

These different types of Kuna verbal art vary from one another in systematic ways utilizing several linguistic and social devices. Sherzer (1987:105) points out that, structurally, 'the line is a basic, central feature of the oral discourse of the Kuna Indians of Panama.' To him, the line is the basic unit of Kuna discourse and it exists across the different genres of Kuna literature. Its existence is easily recognized, and it is overtly marked in chants and in music. He also notes that the distinctive devices that function to mark the differences in the line for each genre are: a) the grammar and morphology, b) syntactic and semantic parallelism, c) intonation and stress patterns including the structure of pauses and the rising and falling of pitch, d) a co-participant's contribution by means of ratifiers and e) lexical differentiation.

Sherzer also points out that there are social differences in the individuals who perform different types of chants; each individual has a specialized role. The *saila*, or chief, chants the myths and instructions that are narrated in the gathering house while the *argar* translates these texts into everyday language. The *gandur* specializes in puberty rites and chants about the preparation of the fermented drinks in those rituals, summoning the spirits that participate in this activity. The *nele*, or medicine man, has a vast knowledge of the curative effects of medicinal plants and of the spirits and chants related to those curing activities. Women sing or chant lullabies to small children. The *kwentomala*, or tales, are usually told by an elder member of the family.

Furthermore, as noted by my father, the audiences to which these different types of discourse are addressed also differ. The stories and the chants of myths are addressed to the community, while the curing and puberty rite chants are addressed to the spirit world. The table below summarizes the differences in intended audience and performer in chants.

Type	**Setting and context**	**Performer(s)**	**Intended audience**
a. Myths, narratives	the gathering house	*Saila* (chief) and/or *Argar* (translator)	the community
b. Curing chants	the home of those ill	*Nele* (medicinal specialist)	several spirits
c. Puberty rites	the chicha house (where the fermented drink is prepared)	*Gandur* (puberty rites specialist)	a single spirit
d. Counseling	usually the gathering house	usually a chief	depends on the context

Table 1. Genres and their social contexts according to Sherzer

On the other hand, Kuna everyday speech does not possess the ritualistic and specific social contexts of the types of Kuna oral tradition. There is a clear demarcation of the types described above and the everyday conversations of Kuna speakers; none of the specific characteristics described in the table are central to establishing the context of an everyday conversation. Nofsinger (1991) discusses three main characteristics that define everyday conversation. First of all, conversations are interactive; this means that at least two people must participate in it, and that "they exchange messages on a real-time basis." (p.3). Second, conversation is locally managed; this means that the participants themselves, during the course of the interaction, determine which people get to speak, in

what order and for how long. Third, conversation is mundane; this means that conversation is commonplace and practical. All these three characteristics pervade our daily interactions and those of Kuna conversations.

Distribution of passive functions

Throughout the paper, I have described different aspects of form (syntactic and morphosyntactic) as well as function of the passive construction in Kuna. The need to examine text data is also important in understanding the distribution of passives in any language. As a result, I will deal with a number of selected texts that will present a glimpse into the use of this construction in a more natural setting.

The discussion in this sample is limited to four types of Kuna speech and discourse that are distinguishable from each other in systematic ways. There are several reasons for choosing to work with these discourse forms:

a. The social functions for each form are different enough that it allows us to compare different distributional characteristics of the passive.

b. Previous work by Sherzer allowed me to adopt his existing classification of Kuna discourse, with respective examples from his fieldwork. This is true for the counseling and the curing chant.

c. A rather significant collection of short narratives and myths was available to me through the Lino Smith (my father) collection. Furthermore, narratives may offer interesting insights to the

restructuring of information in the clause, which more fossilized discourse forms may not exhibit.

d. Also available to me were a number of native speakers on my trips to Panama willing to have their voices recorded. These speakers allowed me to explore more one-to-one interactions more common to everyday conversations.

The methodology consisted of establishing the frequency of occurrence of the passive in each discourse form. To this end, the number of total clauses for each type of discourse is counted. Because this work is concerned with passives, the number of passives from those clauses is counted. Then, the percentage of passives for each type is computed to establish the frequency of their occurrence.

The entire corpus consists of 2,814 total clauses divided as follows:

A total of 1,079 clauses were counted in 43 short narratives and myths. These are some well-known narratives and myths that have been passed down to my father, which he himself has transcribed.

The Way of Cooling Off[8] is a curing chant to reduce fever in a child. This chant is directed to the spirit world. It consists of 465 clauses. This curing chant was performed by Pranki Pilos, of the village of Mulatupu.

The Way of Making Chicha[9] is a magical chant used in the preparation of a fermented drink used in girl's puberty rites. Like other chants, this chant is addressed to

[8] Transcription in Sherzer 2003 (96-125). Recording available through the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin American at www.ailla.utexas.org

the representatives of the spirit world. This chant also describes related events to the making of a *chicha*, which includes participation of Kuna villagers in the rites and festivities. In a sense, this chant could also be considered a form of counseling, since it describes the responsibilities of the participants in the event. It consists of 612 total clauses.

Counseling a New Chief[10] was performed by Chief Muristo as a new chief was inaugurated in the village of Mulatupu. This is one of many forms of verbal counsel. In this case, the counsel for the new chief is set in the gathering house in front of the whole village. Muristo counsels the new chief, and the village as a whole, to behave with high regards to moral behavior. The text includes 417 clauses.

Finally, I have included text of recorded informal conversations in the analysis. These consist of 13 recordings of 7 different speakers[11] made by me in Panama City during the months of December of 2007 and January of 2008. During the course of a conversation, I asked to speakers to describe to me certain daily activities and their procedures (i.e. making soup, going fishing, building a boat), which they describe briefly. The total number of clauses in those 13 recordings is 234.

Table 2 summarizes the number of clauses found in the entire corpus divided into the four different types of speech, as well as the number of passive constructions for each

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[9] Transcription in Sherzer 2003 (152-189). Recording available through the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin American at www.ailla.utexas.org

[10] Transcription in Sherzer 1990 (86-117). Recording available through the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin American at www.ailla.utexas.org

[11] The speakers recorded for this purpose were: Amilda Morris, Lino Smith, Artemio Smith, Etelvina de Smith, Laurencio Montero, Julia Lopez and Dixie Lopez.

type. The rightmost column is the frequency in percentage points that this construction is found in the total number of clauses.

Type	# of total clauses	# of passive const.	% of passives
a. Myths and narratives	1,079	39	3.61%
b. Curing chants	1,077	21	1.94%
c. Counseling	417	15	3.59%
d. Procedural	241	22	9.13%

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of passive constructions in texts

The frequency of occurrence of the passive construction in types a and c is similar, and for curing chants is lower. However, for the procedural descriptions, the frequency of the passive constructions is much higher. This figure in procedural descriptions is a little misleading, since out of six speakers, two of them use passive clauses regularly; the other four speakers do not. This will be discussed further in section 5.2.4. Also, even with an apparent similarity in the percentages of passive constructions for types a, b and c, some interesting patterns emerge. First, it is not uncommon to find passive clauses in myths and narratives (section 5.2.1) that show some type of overt agent in an oblique. On the other hand, in the chants *The Way of Cooling Off* and *The Way of*

Making Chicha (section 5.2.2) and in the counsel *Counseling a New Chief* (section 5.2.3) passive constructions with an overt mention of the agent are uncommon.

Myths and narratives

As stated above, 3.61% of the clauses found in the texts for myths and narratives were passive constructions. There are some interesting points that can be raised in the survey of passives in this discourse form. This section will look closely at the pragmatic function of the occurrences of passive constructions in myths and narratives, and whether these are cases of topicalization or of agent-defocusing.

The first fragment (23) was found in the story '*Muu Mulusad'* or *The Flood.* This story resembles the "Flood" story from the Bible, but it is a well-known story in Kuna tradition. Previous to this fragment, the rain is causing flooding through most of the land.

(23)

1 *Dule-mar-di oimak-ded*
person-PL-INTSF make.noise-recent.pst
'People started screaming

2 *Bab Dummad=se gor-na-naid*
Great Father=ALL call-go-PROG
'(They) were calling for the Great Father'

3. *Ar* *ade* *nali=se* *dain=se* *gu-le-na-nai*

because they shark=DAT alligator=DAT eat-PAS-go-PROG

'because they were being eaten by the shark and alligator'

The functional trigger for the passive in line 3 of fragment (23) is topicalization. In this clause, the pronoun *ade* moves in front of the two agents, while 'alligator' and 'shark' take case to mark the oblique. I consider this an example of topicalization because the 3rd person pronoun patient acting as the subject is not new information, but rather old information which the rest of that clause talks about. In Kuna, because the topic is fronted to the initial position of a sentence, a passive is created to eliminate any ambiguity as to the agent and patient roles of the arguments.

Line one of fragment (24), like example (23), refers to old information. In this fragment, 'achumigur' refers to old information which had been introduced in previous lines. Therefore, it has been fronted only to serve as the topic of the subordinate clause. A passive construction is needed to avoid any ambiguity. This fragment is taken from the story *'Burgualed'* or *Being dead.*

(24)

1. *Achumigur* *ai* *us=sega* *yardak-le-di-gu,*

jaguar friend agouti=DAT trick-PAS-PROG-because

'because the jaguar was being tricked by the agouti'

2. *iba-gwen=gine binsa-armo-sun-do ai us yardake-d=gi*

time-one=LOC think-also-truly-AFF friend agouti trick-NMLZ=LOC

'once also thought of tricking friend agouti'

or 'he once also thought about tricking friend agouti'

Fragment (25) was taken from the story *Gannar Yarmoro Achumigur ebo* or *'The turtle and the jaguar again'*. As a background to this story, the jaguar has been tricked by the turtles several times in several ways. The jaguar, tired of being tricked, seeks revenge. On the way, the jaguar meets the turtle again, but this time, the turtle has company.

(25)

1. *E gwenad-gan soge:*

1pl.Poss family-PL say

'His (the turtle's) family says:'

2. *Achumigur buled-ye na sog soge-ye*

Jaguar strong-QUOT PRO say say-QUOT

'The jaguar himself says (he) is strong'

3. *Bule* *geg* *anmar=se* *yardak-le-balo-dibe-ye*

really not 1pl=DAT trick-PAS-again-may-QUOT

'(Jaguar) really may not be tricked by us again'

Lines two and three of fragment (25) are an interesting example of O fronting. The agent of the underlying transitive phrase in the second clause, the 1st person plural pronoun, is marked by the dative case. Interestingly, the syntactic subject is shared by two clauses: lines 2 and 3. However, this argument is actually the patient of the clause in line 3 but the agent of the clause in 2. If we take topic to be the part of the proposition that is being talked about, '*achumigur'* is clearly topical since this is the theme of the turtle's conversation, and it has scope over two clauses. This example is interesting because the topic has been fronted to the beginning of the clause compound.

An interesting pattern that emerges for passives with an overt agent is that most of those passives (excluding those that appear in quoted speech) appear at the beginning or near the beginning of myths and narratives. It is in the beginning where a storyteller establishes the main participants of the story. As a result, if a passive clause is placed discourse-initially, the participants of the story have to be expressed overtly (including the agents).

On the other hand, agent defocusing as a function of passives is also found in myths and narratives. Sentence (26) is the first clause that introduces a series of stories that narrate about men and animal spirits. This sentence is a plea to older generations to

continue transmitting the stories to the younger generation. In this sentence we find 3 passivized verbs.

(26)

1	*Dule*	*ibdur-gan=ba*	*se-le-s-mala-d*	*igar*
	person	jungle.animal-PL=COM	take-PAS-PST-PL-NMLZ	story
2	*bur*	*sapin-gana=ga*	*sog-le-bi*	*abe-lege*
	more	young-PL=TRNSL	say-PAS-want	*need*-PAS

'The stories of the people who were taken away with the jungle animals (spirits) need to be told to the youth'

In sentence (26), we find the passives *selesmalad and soglebi*. In both cases, the agent is trivial; rather, the event or action of 'taking people' and 'telling stories' take precedence over the agent. Therefore, agent defocusing is the main function here since it diminishes the agent's importance in the discourse, promoting the patient as a result of this process, as opposed to making the agent the topic of the clause. Unlike the fragments in (23) through (25), no overt mention of the agent occurs.

Sentence (27) is also a case of agent defocusing. It appears in the story '*Ai Dabgala' or Friend Heron*. The previous sentences describe how one man approaches 'friend heron' to offer his daughter in marriage because of the heron's superb fishing

skills. One day, friend heron leaves the village to go fishing. Sentence (27) describes what happens when he returns from his fishing trip.

(27) *A sedo=gi ai dabgala gaga-le-sa-sun-do.*
Dem afternoon=LOC friend heron marry-PAS-PST-truly-AFF
'On that afternoon, friend heron was truly married'

The omission of the agent on the above sentence is not surprising. The verb 'marry' in English and Spanish appears in passive/middle constructions in most contexts ('He/she is married' for English; 'Se caso' in Spanish). In Kuna, it is acceptable to use the active verb as a transitive. In these cases, it is the father of the bride who functions as the underlying agent since it is he who chooses a husband for his daughter. Because the agent is unimportant, however, it is not mentioned in the discourse.

Sentence (28) is another case of agent defocusing without an overt agent. This sentence comes from the story *Magiryai*.

(28) *Mukwa Maukuna neg=gi akwi-le-sa-dii*
grandmother Maukuna house=LOC take.care-PAS-PST-PROG
'Grandmother Maukuna was being taken care of in the house'

However, not all the cases of agent defocusing appeared without an over agent in the passive. The fragment in (29) is found in a story called '*Ai us Gannir ebo'* or *The*

agouti and the chicken. The first three lines are the context in which the passive clause in line 4 appears.

(29)

1 *Iba-gwen=gine ai gannir itos-do ai us soge:*
date-one=LOC friend chicken hear-AFF friend agouti say:
'Once upon a time, friend chicken heard friend agouti say:'

2 *gege dule an yardak-ye*
can.not person 1sg trick-QUOT
'Not one person can trick me'

3 *Ai gannir sog-gu:*
friend chicken say-then
'Friend chicken then said:'

4 *Ai usu an=se yardak-le-go-ye*
friend agouti 1sg=DAT trick-PAS-FUT-QUOT
'Friend agouti will get tricked by me'

In the previous fragment, the passive clause in line 4 appears with the overt expression of the agent in oblique form, with the enclitic case for dative. This falls under

Sanso's patient-oriented process of agent defocusing. Why agent defocusing as opposed to topicalization? First of all, in this clause, new information (the patient of the clause in line 4) in the discourse is being introduced. Focus determines the part that of the sentence that contributes new textual information. '*Ai usu'* ('friend agouti') is introduced in the quoted discourse of the chicken. Also, topicalization by simple fronting of the object is available but not used for this clause. Given that one of the arguments is pronominal and the other main argument is not (Section 4.1), fronting would be a less marked use of topic than a passive construction.

Sentences (30) – (32) serve a slightly different function than those in (26) – (29). Although both groups share the main function of agent defocusing, the generic nature of the event expressed in the sentences in 32-35 is the main trigger of the passive.

(30)	*we*	*igar=gi*	*bukidar*	*e=gi*	*sunmak-lege-dii*
	DEM	story=LOC	often	3sg=LOC	talk-PAS-PROG

'This (group of stories) is told often'

The next question is one found in *Us kwento* or the *agouti story*. In this tale, the agouti tricks the jaguar to open a coconut in different unorthodox ways. The jaguar asks the agouti:

(31) *We-de* *igi* *ega-lege?*

DEM-Ques. how open-PAS?

How is this opened? (How do people open this?)

Sentence (32) also exemplifies a generic event. This sentence introduces a series of short stories.

(32)

1 *we-de* *kwento* *ibi* *obare?*

DEM-Ques. story what mean?

'What is a story?'

2 nabir binsa e=gi sunmak-lege-di.

In.reality easily 3sg=ABL tell-PAS-PROG

'In reality, it is simply what is told about'

All of the passive clauses found in myths and narratives and their functions are summarized in Table 3 below. One can observe that patient-oriented processes have the highest instances of all function types. Topicalizing has the second highest frequency in the texts, with the generic event type being the least common.

Function type	# of passive clauses	% of total (39)
a.i Patient-oriented (agent defocusing)	22	56.41%
a.ii Generic event (agent defocusing)	5	12.82%
b. topicalization (overt agent)	12	30.77%

Table 3. Frequency of function types in myths and narratives

Chants

In the curing chant *The Way of Cooling Off* the most prominent example of the passive is one that occurs in (33). The exclusion of the agent is a common characteristic of passives in curing chants, due to the fact that naming the spirits that cause illnesses is avoided because of taboo. This line is repeated throughout the chant to express the seriousness of the illness.

(33) *Inna iawala kia-le-de-ye* (line 101)[12]

chicha path clog-PAS-Rec.PST-MORPH

'His chicha (medicine) path has become clogged'

[12] Sherzer organizes the transcription of Kuna discourse in lines, which he considers an important feature of Kuna poetics (including counseling and curing chants). In the parentheses I include the line where the clause occurs, in case the reader is interested in viewing the overall text.

Also found in this chant is a clause similar to the one above.

(34) *Apalisa* *ue-le-de-ye*[13] (line 25)

bodily.fluid feel.fever-PAS-Rec.PST-MORPH

'(The patient's) bodily fluids have become feverish'

Sentence (34) is normally interpreted in other languages as a middle construction because the experiencer of the event of sickness undergoes some type of change not initiated by a volitional agent. However, the reason this clause is considered a passive and not a middle is because of the Kuna belief that any illness is caused by evil spirits. This is reflected by the possibility of having an active counterpart, exemplified in (35) also found in this chant.

(35) *Mola* *ue-may-de-mala*-ye (line 26)

clothes feel.fever-POS-Rec.PST-PL-MORPH

'(they) made the clothes feverish'

[13] The morpheme –ye in this case has no semantic content. This morpheme has other meanings in other contexts such as a quotative evidential suffix and an optative. '*–ye'* is used in this case as a line breaker, a common way of signaling the ends of lines in many Kuna chants.

It is understood from social contexts who the agent is, even though this is not explicitly mentioned in the chant. As you may recall, Kuna avoids the use of spirit names in their speech.

In *The Way of Making Chicha*, the number of passive constructions is lower than other than that of *The Way of Cooling Off*. In the survey, I was able to find one recurrent event described in the passive. This is exemplified in (36) below.

(36) *unni* *ugaka bal* *itoge-le-suli-ye* (line 75)
only tone anymore hear-PAS-NEG-MORPH
'Different tones cannot be distinguished'

Counseling

I must first say that the number of passive constructions in both curing chants and counseling are different from other types of speech because of interesting genre variability in the use of passives. Because highly ritualized forms of speech exhibit different characteristics of ethnopoetics, patterns like repetitions and parallelisms are very common. Therefore, many of the passive constructions were variants of the same metaphor with slight changes by the performer. This skews the total count of clauses for the performance.

Sentence (37) is a very common metaphor in counseling ceremonies. According to Sherzer, strong trees symbolize the strength of a chief. A tree well planted represents a very strong chief, with high morals and great leadership. That said, this example is one

of agent-defocusing, where the agent of the action (the planter) is completely irrelevant. This sentence falls under the rubric of patient-oriented process of agent-defocusing.

(37) *Sapi walagwen tiy-le-soggalid* *nug=gi* (line 196)
tree one plant-PASS-about.to.be name=INST
'In the name of the tree about to be planted'

Sentence (38) appears in a fragment where the counselor, the older chief, tells the incoming chief that he will be held accountable by the community for any display of unacceptable behavior. The clause previous to (38) mentions the hitting of the wife as an unacceptable behavior. Sentence (38) would be the result of his actions if he were to incur in this behavior. The next clause continues with other forms of punishments.

(38) *Panet=se* *an=ga* *sog-le-nonik-go* (line 145)
tomorrow=ALL 1sg=DAT say-PAS-come.to-FUT
'Tomorrow I will be spoken to'

As was the case with (37), the importance of the initiator of the action, the agent, is diminished. Rather, the importance is placed on the event of 'being spoken to' to highlight the seriousness of any wrongful action that the chief may commit. Here, the main function is clearly that of agent-defocusing.

Procedural

This discourse type is a product of my own fieldwork. It arose from informal, everyday conversations in Spanish and later in Kuna. These are all native Kuna speakers who I asked to explain to me a process, describing something that they know how to do well. All the speakers are fully competent Kuna speakers who use the language in their daily activities (and many times, between each other since they are all acquaintances).

There is a stark contrast between two speakers[14] (I will call these Speaker A and Speaker B) and the rest of the speakers in the use of passives in procedural descriptions. I have reproduced the part of Table 2 that looks specifically at procedural descriptions to help us understand this contrast.

d. Procedural text	241	22	9.13%

Table 4. Frequency of passive constructions in procedural texts

The percentage of passive constructions is misleading. Out of the 22 passive clauses found in these descriptions, 15 were found in the speech of only two speakers. The other 7 passive clauses were evenly divided among the other four speakers. Also, the total number of clauses counted in the speech of those two speakers is 32, making

[14] It is important to note that Speaker A and B are from two different communities, and as a result, speak slightly different dialects of Kuna. Therefore, their choice of the use of passive is not due to a dialectal preference to use passives in descriptions. Another speaker of the same dialect as Speaker A, describing the same process of making soup, used mainly active clauses throughout her description.

their passives a 46.87% of the total clauses. This means that for the rest of the speakers, passive constructions make up 3.36 % of the 309 total clauses. The latter percentage is close to those percentages reported for the other speech genres.

Speaker A described how to make *dulemasi*, a soup made out of coconout oil. (39) is a representative fragment of this description.

(39)

1 *dulemas sa-lege-d*

soup make-PAS-NMLZ

'Soup being made'

2 *gebe sagla ogob ebi-le-gebe*

first hair coconut take.out-PAS-must

'First, the hair of the coconut must be disposed of'

3 *geb dakena ogob nis oburu-le-goed*

then INTRJ coconut liquid pour-PAS-FUT

'Then, you see, the coconut milk will be poured'

4 *ogob nis nak-le-goed, soo=gi*

coconut liquid raise-PAS-FUT, fire=LOC

'the coconut milk will be raised to the fire'

Fragment (39) gives us a sample of the tone of the description, in which the agent is omitted throughout the conversation. Speaker B also follows a similar structure on fragment (40) in his description of how to prepare a fish.

(40)

1 *e san imak-ega, e uka imak-le-goe*

3sg meat cook-to, 3sg skin do-PAS-FUT

'To cook its meat, (something) will be done to the skin'

2 *e uka sasi-le-goe*

3sg skin scrape-PAS-FUT

'Its skin will be scraped (the scales)'

3 *e san bi suo-le-goe*

3sg skin only take-PAS-FUT

'Its skin will only be taken'

At first glance, we notice the absence of the overt agent in all these examples. Given that the agent is anyone who is preparing the soup or the fish, its importance is minimized. Instead, importance is placed upon the different small events leading up to the completion of the meals.

This strategy was not used by all the speakers. The remaining four speakers all used a similar strategy when making their descriptions. They did not use passive constructions in their procedural conversations.[15]

(41) Speaker C

1 *be ua sona-sokar-dibe*

2sg fish fish-say-if

'If you say you will fish (fish)'

2 *be binsa-o-do bia ua suna-oe*

2sg think-FUT-AFF where fish find-FUT

'You should think where you will find fish'

3 *be noder-gebed, wakudar yarba*

2sg go.out-must, dawn

'You must go out by dawn'

[15] This choice seems to be simply one of personal style. In a later conversation with one of the speakers who used active sentences, he stated that he could have produced sentences using the *–le* forms instead, and it was totally acceptable. This point, however, needs further exploration in a future research.

(42) Speaker D

1 *be ur sobso-gar-dibe*

2sg boat make-POT-if

'If you are going to make a small boat,'

2 *achabigwad be abege*

how.many 2sg want

'How many do you want?'

3 *geb, be bak-na-oe*

then 2sg buy-IMPRF-FUT

'Then, you will have bought it'

Fragments (41) and (42) are different from the previous two fragments not only in the way the sentences are structured, but also in the tone of the interaction due to the choice of these structures. (41) and (42) appear more like direct orders, guiding the listener in what needs to happen in order to accomplish the goal. (39) and (40), on the other hand, do not seem to be as direct, placing the importance on the events.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

There are three concluding remarks that I would like to mention. First of all, in several other languages, the percentages of occurrence of passives have also been reported. Shibatani (1988:95) reports that the in English and Japanese the active forms predominate in text counts of clauses. Using Svartik (1966:46), Shibatani reports that in English, the corpus of writing,[16] 32% of the sentences were passives. In novels, the frequency drops to 5% of passive sentences. He also notes that Givon (1979:59) reports that 4% to 18% of the sentences in his corpus were passive. Shibatani himself observes that in Japanese, in his count of 508 total clauses, 18% of the sentences are passive. In novels and essays, however, only 5% of the sentences were passives. England (1988:539) reports that for Mam 5% of the total clauses in narrative discourse were passives. The numbers for English and Japanese are interesting because they show variability in the passive count depending on the type of discourse. In novels and essays the percentage for passives for both English and Japanese is 5%, which is similar to the count for narratives in Mam at 5% or Kuna at 3%. Therefore, the relative infrequency of the passive in Kuna is not as 'rare' as I had initially suspected.

Also, I believe that this statistic is important because it has been reported (Constenla Umaña 1991) that neighboring Chibchan languages lack passives altogether. This might suggest some diachronic development of the Kuna language separate from its

[16] The author does not specify the genres that Svartik discusses in his corpus.

sister languages. A more thorough investigation into this phenomenon across several Chibchan languages will allow us to understand how this passive construction developed for Kuna, but not for other related languages.

The second point to consider is that the type of speech has a direct correlation to the function of any passives that are employed, whether topicalization or agent-defocusing. If one understands the context of each form of discourse, we may find answers as to the pragmatic-functional account of the passive construction in each type. For example, in a regular Kuna narrative, it is overwhelmingly common to find the expression of two (or more) participants. The restructuring of these arguments allows for the appropriate contextualization depending on the argument that the speaker tries to foreground. The Kuna counseling and curing chants are different in that no explicit participant is usually mentioned in these discourse forms. Therefore, factors other than proper contextualization become more prominent. In chants of these kind, generic events and patient-oriented processes (e.g. the new chief and the child patient become recipients) are much more common. In procedural descriptions, it is more common to find variability depending on the speaker. However, those passive constructions that I was able to find were restricted to the generic-like events in the agent defocusing type of passives. None of the 32 passive constructions contained an overt agent.

Third, the lack of agreement among linguists for establishing a clear cross-linguistic pragmatic-functional definition of passives has led to numerous re-analyses of the processes that characterize passive constructions. Because there are some overlaps in

many of the characteristics, we can take a more inclusive approach to defining passives, instead of relying on a single clear-cut, well-defined functional delimitation.

This paper looked at two different emphases of the function of passives in the world's languages. It appears as if the Kuna case allows for the compatibility of the two views since both functional approaches account for different distributions of passives in Kuna examples. Also important is the identification of different situation types that Sansó proposes for the distribution of the pragmatic function of agent-defocusing. This idea is useful in differentiating various passive constructions in Kuna that exhibit important functional distinctions.

Finally, I hope that this type of analysis can make contributions not only to the linguistic community, but also the Kuna community in Panama. Over the last decades, a growing interest in the language and culture of the Kuna has permitted a number of Kuna scholars to work toward the common goal of educating newer generations and raising awareness of the danger of language loss in our communities. The continuous migration of Kuna towards urban areas has diminished the percentage of Kuna speakers. However, there is a strong indication from community leaders, as well as younger Kuna who live in Panama City, that they want this trend reversed. A bilingual education curriculum that includes aspects of culture and language, using Kuna as the main language of instruction, is the first tangible step towards this process. The investigation of the grammar of the language may one day serve as a tool that can be used in schools throughout the Kuna territories. As a speaker of the language, nothing would make me prouder.

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